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ABSTRACT

The Even Start--Padres y Progreso program was a nationally funded program in Houston (Texas) designed to prepare young children to enter school not only by offering early childhood education, but also assisting their families with adult literacy/English as a second language, parenting skills training, and employment skills training. The program began in 1991-92, and by 1993-94, 71 families were participating. For the 1992-93 school year, demographic and testing data and literacy measures from 50 parents and their children were used to evaluate the program. As there was no national evaluation in 1993-94, alternate tests were used for adults and students. The 1994-95 evaluation used adults' scores on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment from previous years and other program data. After four years of program implementation in the Tijerina Elementary School, participating adults made strides in language acquisition, literacy, and life and job skills. Children of participating families who enrolled in Tijerina Elementary School performed higher on the Pre-Language Assessment Scales on entering school than did a comparison group of students. (Contains 6 tables and 23 references.) (SLD)

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Evaluation of the Fourth and Final Year of the Even Start—Padres y Progreso Program

by

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Abstract

The Even Start—Padres y Progreso program was a nationally funded program designed to prepare young children to enter school by not only offering early childhood education, but also assisting their families with adult literacy/ESL, parenting skills training, and employment skills training. After four years of program implementation, participating adults made strides in language acquisition, literacy, and life and job skills. Children of participating families who enrolled in Tijerina Elementary School performed higher on the Pre-LAS, a language assessment test, upon entering school than did a comparison group of students.

Evaluation of the Fourth and Final Year of the

Even Start—Padres y Progreso Program

Introduction

Program Description

The Padres y Progreso program at Tijerina Elementary School was funded by a $200,000 Even Start grant from the U.S. Department of Education for one year beginning with the 1991–92 school year, renewable for four years based on program evaluation results. The program began serving families during the spring of 1992.

The Even Start—Padres y Progreso program (hereinafter referred to as Even Start) was designed to not only work with the children to prepare them to enter school, but to offer literacy and English as a Second Language classes to their parents, parenting classes to encourage them to work with and teach their children while at home, and job skills training and other services to assist parents in obtaining work, medical, or social benefits. The goals of the Even Start program were:

- to enhance the language development of the child through school and home-based activities that increase parent/child interactive behavior; and
- to support parent growth in literacy through areas of personal need.

The target group for this Even Start program in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) was Hispanic families who had children between the ages of 0–7 years and lived in the Tijerina Elementary School attendance zone. Families accepted into the program were those who would benefit most from and commit to participating in all of the program areas regarding early childhood education, adult literacy, parenting skills training, and job skills training. The program operated out of the Magnolia Multipurpose Center located near the elementary school.

The Even Start program, as indicated above, consisted of four components. The first component was Parent/Child Interaction Training which provided parents with

information about child rearing methods. The second component was Library Training which provided training to parents through interactive activities with their children that encouraged familiarity with books and stories, language development, and the use of the library. The third component was Co-op Development which provided parent training in starting and maintaining a child care cooperative that taught job skills, parenting skills, and gave parents an opportunity for free child care while participating in the self-help skills training component. The fourth component was Self-Help Skills Training which provided parents instruction in parenting skills, personal and family counseling, self-esteem, personal grooming, ESL, General Education Development (GED), job skills, job search skills, and computer assisted instruction. The adult literacy, ESL, and GED classes were offered in conjunction with the Houston Community College.

Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The Even Start program at Tijerina Elementary School was evaluated at the end of the 1992–93 and 1993–94 school years (Stevens, Gavito, & de la Rosa, 1994; Stevens & Gavito, 1994). This evaluation, conducted at the end of the fourth and final year of the program, covers activities offered during the 1994–95 school year and program effectiveness over the three full school years of implementation. The following research questions are addressed in this paper:

1. What activities were provided through each of the program's four components?
2. What have been the participation rates for the Even Start program?
3. What differences, if any, were there between Even Start children and other children entering Tijerina Elementary School concerning preparedness for school?
4. What differences, if any, were there between Even Start children and other children entering Tijerina Elementary School concerning academic performance during their initial school years?

5. What improvements, if any, have parents made in the acquisition of language skills, life skills, and job skills?

Literature Review

Beginning in 1989, the U.S. Department of Education awarded Even Start grants to local education agencies working in consultation with other non-profit agencies to provide family-based education services to parents and children. HISD's Tijerina Elementary School was the recipient of one such grant, renewable for four years. Even Start—Padres y Progreso gives parental support to Hispanic families through literacy, ESL, and child development classes and offers support services such as child care and referral services. The emphasis is on language development for both the parents and the young children to prepare the children for entry into the school system.

Texas Senate Bill 477/House Bill 866 entitled "Bilingual Education and Special Language Programs" requires that students remain in a bilingual program with instruction in Spanish and English until they are able to score above the 40th percentile in reading or language on an English standardized achievement test. Students in third and fourth grade may take the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in Spanish; however, students in fifth grade must take TAAS in English. This allows little time for preparing students to fully make the transition from Spanish to English instruction.

Schools and parents face a challenge to work together to provide the necessary education and support that children need. Therefore, parents must continue to be involved in their child's school, and schools must continue to reach out to parents. Epstein and Dauber (1991) used data from teachers in elementary and middle schools to examine the connection between school programs of parent involvement, teachers' attitudes, and the practices that teachers use to involve parents of their own students. Results indicated that when teachers make parent involvement part of their regular teaching practices, parents increase their interactions with their children at home, feel

more positive about their abilities to help their children in the elementary grade, and rate the teachers as better teachers overall. Students improve their attitudes toward school and their academic achievement. Other research documents the contribution of parent involvement to positive outcomes, such as higher student attendance and higher educational aspirations among students and parents (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991).

Most parents, especially bilingual or non-English monolingual parents, need help to enhance involvement in their children's education at each grade level. Research suggests some major components which should be part of a school's comprehensive parent involvement program. Among these are developing parenting skills and encouraging children's learning activities at home.

Family literacy programs are predicated on the beliefs that children's early learning is greatly influenced by their parents, that parents must develop and value their own literacy skills in order to support their children's educational success, and that parents are their children's first and best teachers. (Gottfried, 1985; Stevens, 1984; Moss, 1983; Smith, 1982; White, Kaban, & Attanucci, 1978; Gordon, 1971, 1973; Deutsch, 1964). Coming from this background, Even Start provides a coordinated approach to family literacy by integrating programs for early childhood education, adult basic education, and parenting education. Even Start also provides support services such as transportation, counseling, and child care to enable parents to support their children's educational readiness. Focusing on the family unit, Even Start strives to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners, help parents become full partners in the education of their children, and provide literacy for parents.

Adult Education

The related educational needs of children and their parents guide the design of Even Start programs. The parent-child component in the Even Start plan may act as an added incentive to adult participation that is not present in traditional adult basic

education programs. However, even with this unique motivational component, Even Start providers may experience the same poor attendance and dropout rates experienced by other adult basic education programs if they are not attuned to the personal and social constraints that often work at cross purposes to educational success.

The best adult education programs are mindful of the reluctance and fear that many adults experience when faced with the prospect of going back to school (Beder, 1991; Chisman, 1989; Jackson, 1990). Many adult students have dropped out of school, have experienced years of failure in the public school system, or have failed to see the relevance of schooling to their personal lives. Some adult students also lack transportation, resources, or the child care necessary to engage in educational pursuits.

Successful program designers are cognizant of these adult issues and strive to minimize the fears, build sensitive, client-centered learning environments, and attend to the logistical barriers to participation. These programs utilize many of the following techniques in service delivery:

- a mix of instructional methods including experimental, group, and self-directed learning, as well as individual tutoring and computer-aided instruction;
- a qualified and resourceful staff that reflects the cultural composition of the group;
- appropriate teaching materials and assessments related to adult interest and ability levels;
- a curriculum related to specific adult life goals;
- a human resource development component (e.g., parenting skills and health services); and
- methods by which student progress is monitored and evaluated in the context of meaningful adult education. (RMC Research Corporation, 1991)

Generally, programs that focus on the expressed needs and interests of the adult learner are more successful than those that stress general educational improvement with no specific goal or end point (Pelavin Associates, Inc., 1990). Adult education classes that

are linked with paid employment or those that assist adults in managing their daily lives, pursuing personal interests, or interacting with their children are most appealing. Keeping parents' needs and the best adult education practices in the forefront during planning or collaborating with other agencies or organizations maximizes the potential for the fullest participation from parents. Implementing appropriate and appealing adult components is crucial to the success of the Even Start initiative.

English as a Second Language

Because many of the Even Start parents are not able to speak, read, or write in English, English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered to parents when they begin adult literacy training. ESL is a program which focuses on the development of the English language through the use of specific methods that incorporate listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Krashen, 1981).

Several approaches intended to teach second languages have been developed throughout history. The following are descriptions of some of these approaches.

- The grammar-translation method which goes as far back as the learning of Latin during the middle ages, focuses on learning language rules and translating written text.
- The direct-method is a language immersion approach developed by Maximilian Berlitz. In this method the student's first language is not allowed.
- The audio-lingual approach developed by the U.S. Army after World War II, consists of the practice and memorization of situation-based dialogues through drills. In addition, conversations with native speakers about the dialogue are required.
- The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach suggests that the second language is learned through a long period of listening and comprehension development prior to production.

- The notional-functional approach provides students with situations to learn to agree, argue, question, and compliment (Lessow-Hurley, 1990).
- The whole language approach, commonly referred to as the natural approach, is a developmental language model based on the premise that youngsters acquire language as naturally as they learn to walk and talk, then they are invited to engage in self-motivating activities that are stimulating, interesting, social, purposeful, interactive, and most of all enjoyable (Goodman, 1980).

The ESL program offered through Even Start utilizes a combination of the TPR and direct-method approaches described above.

Methods

Data Collection

For the 1992–93 school year, demographic and testing data were collected and sent to Pelavin Associates for the national evaluation. For that year, pre- and post-test literacy measures were administered to a random sample of 50 parents and their children ages 0–7 years, as dictated by the national evaluation guidelines. Parents received the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) and the children were tested using the Pre-School Inventory (PSI) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R). The CASAS is an adult literacy/life skills test which was group administered in English. The PSI measures developmental status while the PPVT-R measures vocabulary acquisition. The children's tests were administered individually in Spanish. The results from this evaluation are found in Stevens, Gavito, & de la Rosa (1994).

As there was no national evaluation conducted for the 1993–94 school year, the program personnel determined that more useful information could be obtained from alternate tests. It was decided that adults would be tested using the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) test in addition to the CASAS. Children were assessed using the Denver Developmental Screening Test (Denver) and the Preschool Language Scale-3 (PLS-3).

Pre-tests were administered during October and November, 1993, to all adults and children participating in the program; the administration of the post-tests occurred during April, 1994. Stevens & Gavito (1994) presents the results from the 1993–94 evaluation.

This 1994–95 evaluation report utilizes adult CASAS scores from previous administrations in 1992 and 1993, November, 1994, and April, 1995. Other adult outcome measures were collected from the program director. Pre-LAS scores, student attendance data, and Language Arts grades were obtained from HISD data bases. Interviews with the program director provided information on program implementation. The comparison group of children consisted of randomly selected Tijerina Elementary School students matched to the Even Start students based on gender and grade level.

Descriptive data are presented for the results of the children's Pre-LAS and adults' CASAS tests. The children's Pre-LAS raw scores, attendance rates, and Language Arts course grades were analyzed using *t*-tests for independent samples; paired *t*-test statistical analysis was conducted on the parents' CASAS scale scores. The *t*-test is an inferential statistic which indicates whether there is a statistically significant difference between two means (Maxwell & Delaney, 1990).

Assessment Instruments

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) is a comprehensive curriculum management and assessment system designed to assess identified competencies of educational programs for all levels of Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, and Adult Special Education, including employability curriculums. The CASAS measures adult literacy and life skills. This nationally validated program provides for:

- Accurate placement of students into educational and training programs from beginning through advanced levels of ESL and pre-employment training programs.

- Monitoring student progress.
- Certifying attainment of competencies as students progress to higher program levels and for program completion.
- Linkage of assessment to curriculum and instruction. (CASAS, 1992)

CASAS has been validated by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP) and is approved as an exemplary program for national dissemination through the U.S. Department of Education National Diffusion Network.

Language Assessment Scales (LAS) measures language proficiency. The LAS includes those aspects of language which can determine if an individual's proficiency is comparable to that of his/her monolingual peers, and probable achievement (or nonachievement) in an English only classroom or setting. It was developed based on the four subsystems of language: phonology, lexicon, syntax, and pragmatics (De Avila & Duncan, 1981). The Pre-LAS is designed for children from ages 48 months to 83 months (prekindergarten and kindergarten age ranges), LAS Level I is administered to children in first grade through fifth grade. Level II is applicable for individuals in the sixth grade through adulthood.

Results

What activities were provided through each of the program's four components?

The Even Start—Padres y Progreso program as it was originally designed consisted of four components. Through four years of program implementation, the four components remained central to the program, and yet the emphasis placed on them and the way in which they were implemented changed somewhat with the hiring of a new program director at the end of the 1993–94 school year. Because of her expertise in computers and technology, the new director improved the computer lab at the center and offered more in the way of educational software for both the children and the adults. All participants were given time to work on the computers and were encouraged to use them.

Another change was less of an emphasis on home visits and more emphasis on parents working with their children under the guidance of the Parent Coordinator at the center. The home visits were used to follow up on families that appeared to need more assistance than what was offered in the group settings at the center. Below is a description of how Even Start was implemented during the fourth and final year of the program.

Parent/Child Interaction Training. There were two elements of the Parent/Child Interaction Training component of Even Start. The first was Parent and Child (PAC) time which took place at the center under the direction of the Parent Coordinator. Parents also were encouraged to lead some of the PAC sessions. Sessions included reading stories to the children and involving them in activities, such as making puppets or coloring, based upon the stories. The children were led through a number of hands-on activities, including early childhood software packages, that were developmentally appropriate to encourage language development and parent/child interaction.

The second element of the Parent/Child Interaction Training consisted of home visits where the Parent Coordinator performed similar activities with the children reinforcing the same skills learned at the center. The coordinator provided parents with off-line computer activities and puzzles that could be used with their children. Parent and child interactions also were observed in the home setting. The coordinator gave feedback to the parents on their children's development and on their interactions with their children.

Library Training. Librarians from the neighborhood library taught an 18-hour seminar in both the fall and the spring for parents. The seminar incorporated such topics as: reading with expression, selecting age-appropriate and interest-appropriate books, interactive reading through the use of questioning techniques, and follow-up activities relating to the stories which were read. Parents also created an alphabet/number/color book for their children to use.

Co-op Development. The Even Start program offered a cooperative child care component that allowed parents participating in the adult education courses to have free child care for children under the age of five years. There was one group of children from infants to two year olds and one group of three to five year olds. The co-op averaged 18 children over the two age groups for three hours a day, five days a week. The co-op was operated by a group of approximately 10 parents who received training in early childhood education methods and were hired by the program to work in the center. Even Start program staff supervised the cooperative. One requirement was that all parents who had children in the child care co-op were to volunteer their time to work in the co-op. The trained parents served as role models for the volunteer parents. This provided the volunteer parents with the opportunity to witness positive adult/child interactions and it provided manpower for the co-op. The parents who were hired to work in the co-op learned employment skills as they were involved in planning meetings, had to make and keep time schedules, and had to perform specific work duties.

Self-Help Skills Training. The Even Start program provided parents with a number of self-help skills training opportunities. The main element of this program component was adult education. The Houston Community College placed instructors at the Magnolia Multipurpose Center to teach ESL and GED courses to parents. During the first semester of the 1994–95 school year, courses were offered for eight hours per week increasing to 12 hours per week during the second semester.

Another element of the Self-Help Skills Training component consisted of weekly parenting classes which addressed topics such as: self-esteem, discipline management, available resources through local agencies, preparing healthy meals and snacks, AIDS awareness, medical issues affecting children, etc. These classes were held on Fridays and usually lasted two hours. In addition, parents and children were taken on field trips to the Museum of Natural Science, the Houston Arboretum, several plays, Space Center Houston, and the Children's Museum. The field trips served to enrich the ESL

experience for the adults and provided a wider range of experiences for both the parents and the children.

An optional element of the program concerned computer skills training. A computer lab was set up at the center where classes were taught in computer literacy, word processing, database management, early childhood software, and ESL instructional software. After parents became familiar with the early childhood software, such as Bailey's Bookhouse, Thinking Things, and Playworld, they used the software packages with their children during PAC time (described under the first program component).

A second optional element of this program component was arts and crafts classes. Parents were encouraged to create instructional materials to use with their children at home, as well as to do projects for their own recreation. Some of the art projects were used as fund raisers for the program.

What have been the participation rates for the Even Start program?

Of the 88 adults participating in the program during the 1992–93 school year, all of them were Hispanic; 84 were female with an average age of 30 years. The participating families had an average of three children between the ages of 0–18 and at least one child under the age of seven. At the start of the program, eight of the 88 participants had completed high school or received a GED, while over half had completed five or less years of schooling. Furthermore, almost 90% were unemployed with 87% of these having been unemployed for over 12 months. At the time of the intake interview, 41% of the participating adults were receiving welfare services.

Spanish was the primary language for 98% of the adult program participants. When the participants began the program, about two-thirds understood English somewhat; however, over 40% could not read or speak English at all. Only 13% had participated in previous ESL education.

By the end of the 1993–94 school year, there were 71 families participating in the program; and by the end of the 1994–95 school year, there 53 families participating in the program. Each year, a number of families left the program and others were added to take their place. A total of 14 families with 29 children participated throughout the entire length of the program. For the three full school years of program implementation, the average length of participation was 1.75 years.

What differences, if any, were there between Even Start children and other children entering Tijerina Elementary School concerning preparedness for school?

One goal of the Even Start program was to "enhance the language development of the child through school and home-based activities that increase parent/child interactive behavior." By focusing on the language development of children before they become school age, Even Start addresses the national education goal that all children will enter school prepared to learn. To measure "preparedness to learn," children's Pre-LAS scores were used. All children in HISD are tested with the Pre-LAS upon entering school to determine their English and Spanish language proficiency. Scores for 67 Even Start children were compared to a sample of other Tijerina Elementary School children who were matched to the Even Start children on gender and grade at time of test (i.e., prekindergarten, kindergarten, first grade). The results of a *t*-test analysis on independent samples are provided in Tables 1 and 2. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of children in English proficiency; however, the Even Start children scored significantly higher than the comparison group of children on the Spanish language portion of the test.

Table 1

Results of *t*-test on Pre-LAS English Scale Scores

English	Number of Cases	Mean	Stand. Dev.
Even Start	67	10.1	19.4
Tijerina	67	10.1	18.7
	t=.00	*df*=132	*p*=.997

Table 2

Results of *t*-test on Pre-LAS Spanish Scale Scores

Spanish	Number of Cases	Mean	Stand. Dev.
Even Start	67	65.8	22.8
Tijerina	67	55.4	29.7
	t=2.28	*df*=124	*p*=.024*

*p<.05

The results of the Pre-LAS test for the Even Start children corroborate the results of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) of vocabulary acquisition that was administered in 1992–93 and the Preschool Language Scale-3 (PLS-3) language development test given in 1993–94. In 1992–93, the Even Start children showed a statistically significant improvement from the November pre-test to the April post-test on the PPVT-R (Stevens, Gavito, & de la Rosa, 1994). Statistically significant improvement also was reported on the auditory comprehension subscale of the PLS-3 from the November pre-test to the April post-test, but not on the expressive comprehension subscale (Stevens & Gavito, 1994).

What differences, if any, were there between Even Start children and other children entering Tijerina Elementary School concerning academic performance during their initial school years?

Attendance data for the 1994–95 school year were obtained for a group of 109 Even Start children and a comparison group of students at Tijerina Elementary School matched to the Even Start participants on gender and grade level. Table 3 gives the results of a *t*-test analysis for independent samples on the attendance rates for both groups. The difference was statistically significant with the Even Start children having a 97.5% attendance rate in comparison to the other group's attendance rate of 95.6%.

Table 3

Results of *t*-test Analysis on Attendance Rates

	Number of Cases	Mean	Stand. Dev.
Even Start	109	97.5	2.9
Tijerina	108	95.6	4.5
	t=3.59	df=184.31	p=.000*

*p<.01

Table 4 presents the *t*-test analysis on the end-of-year Language Arts course grades for both the Even Start participants and the comparison group of students at Tijerina Elementary School. Because many of the students were in prekindergarten and kindergarten, there were only 50 Even Start children and 30 students from the comparison group with course grades. Although the results were not statistically significant, the Even Start children had a higher average course grade than the other students.

Table 4

Results of *t*-test Analysis on Language Arts Course Grades

	Number of Cases	Mean	Stand. Dev.
Even Start	50	85.8	8.9
Tijerina	30	81.9	12.1
	t=1.64	df=78	p=.105

The percentage of students promoted or retained was collected for both groups of students to determine if there were any differences. Table 5 shows that a higher percentage of Even Start children were promoted to the next grade than were the comparison group from Tijerina Elementary School.

Table 5

Percentage of Students Promoted, Placed, or Retained by Group

	Even Start (%)	Tijerina (%)
Promoted	78	72
Placed	3	7
Retained	3	7
N/A	17	13

Because Even Start is geared for families with children from birth to seven years of age, a number of the children who have been with the program for several years are just now entering prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade. In HISD, the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE) is administered starting in second grade, and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), Spanish version, is administered in third and fourth grades. Consequently, scores on these standardized tests are available this year for only a handful of Even Start participants. Subsequent evaluations, after more of

the Even Start children enter second, third, and fourth grades, should take students' performance on these tests into account.

What improvements, if any, have parents made in the acquisition of language skills, life skills, and job skills?

One measure of effectiveness of the adult education component of the program was the CASAS which was administered as a pre/post-test. As stated earlier, the CASAS measures adult literacy and life skills. Some of the participants had been in the program since the beginning and others were new this year. The pre-test scores used were for the first time the adult was tested: 1992, 1993, or 1994. The post-test scores were those from the April, 1995, test administration. Although results from the paired t-test on the CASAS scores did not indicate a statistically significant improvement (see Table 6), the average score for the post-test was higher than the pre-test. Using scale scores, improvements were recorded for 15 of the 23 participants (65%) with both pre- and post-test data. These results are similar to those from the 1993–94 evaluation (Stevens & Gavito, 1994). There was no significant difference between pre- and post-tests given during the 1993–94 school year, yet 16 participants (64%) scored higher on the post-test. The only statistically significant differences were witnessed on the CASAS for the 1992–93 school year (Stevens, Gavito, & de la Rosa, 1994).

Table 6

Results of Paired *t*-test on CASAS Scale Scores

	Number of Pairs	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Diff.	Stand. Dev.	Effect Size	*t* value	2-Tail *p*
CASAS	23	211.6	215.2	3.6	8.57	.420	2.02	.056

One of the program goals was to "support parent growth in literacy through areas of personal need." This was to be achieved through offering literacy and ESL classes, parenting classes, job skills training, and other services to assist parents in obtaining work, medical, or social benefits. During the 1994–95 school year, 75 adults participated for an average of 98 hours in the adult education classes offered through the program; classes included ESL 1, 2, and 3, GED, and computer lab time. Parenting classes, self-help classes, and parent/child activities were attended by 66 adults for an average of 36.5 hours.

As of the fourth year of the program, seven parents had found full-time employment, another seven were working part-time, and one had received a work permit. Two parents received their GED and three parents advanced from Level III ESL classes to the GED classes. Eighteen were Home Room Mothers in their children's classes; ten served as parent tutors at Tijerina. Two parents were members of the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) at Tijerina and one was the president. Eighteen parents participated in first aid training, one mother got her drivers license, and two others received medical treatment that they would not have sought otherwise.

Conclusion

The Even Start program was designed nationally and implemented locally to work with the whole family in order to ensure that upon entry into school, young children would be prepared to learn. The importance of this program, and consequently of the results of this study concerning its efficacy, is that much is discussed in literature about the need for parents to be involved in their children's education for students to achieve academic success. If parents encourage their children and take an active part in their learning, students will strive to do better and will be more interested in achieving. It is difficult for parents whose primary language is not English, who may not be able to speak or read English, and/or who may not have received much education to prepare their

young children for entering school or to assist them with school work, once they begin taking classes. The theory of the Even Start program is that if parents are better prepared to care for and teach their young children, these children will be better prepared to begin school and will have a higher academic success rate.

Demographic data retrieved from the initial interview process illustrate that most of the adults served in this Even Start program were Hispanic, had limited English language skills, and were unemployed mothers with several children at home. In addition, over half of the children had not received any prior formal educational experiences to prepare them for starting school. Consequently, the positive results found from this study are encouraging. Not only have the parents, most specifically the mothers, made strides in English language acquisition and literacy, the Even Start children who entered Tijerina Elementary School performed better on the Pre-LAS, had higher attendance rates, and were promoted to the next grade level at a higher rate than a comparison group of children at Tijerina. Furthermore, a number of mothers who had not previously been employed found full or part-time employment and many became active participants in their children's education by working with their children at the center and at home, and by volunteering as Home Room Mothers at Tijerina.

As this was the final year of program implementation, a subsequent study, conducted after more of the Even Start children enter elementary school, would provide more detailed information on how the program has affected the children's academic performance and the extent to which their parents have remained involved in their education both at home and at school.

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